

PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

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IN 1961, and again in 1963, the Legislature requested the State Health Department to investigate fatal cases of aplastic anemia associated with the use of chloramphenicol. In its request of last year, the Legislature urged the California Medical Association to take steps to extend its efforts towards the education of its members and to investigate and report on any and all drugs of a dangerous nature.

The present study of fatal cases of aplastic anemia has been planned and is being conducted in a manner similar to the joint study of maternal and neonatal deaths, and with the cooperation of CMA and the California Pharmaceutical Association.

For purposes of the study the state has been divided into five regions. Regional committees, supported by consultants, will review each case. Initially, a pilot study is being undertaken in the San Francisco Bay area. Each regional committee will consist of a hematologist, a pathologist, a public health physician and three physicians in clinical practice.

There are two aspects of the study, case reviews and survey of physicians and pharmacies to obtain information on the number of patients receiving chloramphenicol.

In the first phase, special consultants nominated by the CMA and appointed by the department are making detailed studies of fatal cases of aplastic anemia. Cases associated with chloramphenicol and those not so associated are being studied.

The summary they make will be as complete as possible, utilizing reviews with the physician last in charge of the patient, hospital records and other physicians who have had contact with the case. Absolute confidentiality is insured by state law

and will be maintained in connection with all data found during the study.

Purpose of the survey is to ascertain, as feasible, by a postcard query of a nine per cent sample of the physicians and pharmacies in California the number of persons in the state who have received chloramphenicol during the period of study, irrespective of reason or associated toxic reactions. It is the hope to obtain a basis to estimate risk of aplastic anemia to persons receiving the drug.

The 1964 influenza A outbreak in California has now subsided, although it remains possible that a few sporadic cases and laboratory confirmations will continue to be observed.

The outbreak was of only moderate severity when compared with epidemics of earlier years, especially that which occurred in 1960. Although the virus was disseminated throughout most regions of the state, there was no evidence of severe crippling of communities due to widespread respiratory disease.

The early indications that the effects of influenza A were being felt statewide were seen in the reporting of pneumonia-influenza deaths from eight California cities. During the week ended February 29 a rise above the epidemic threshold was observed which was sustained for the following 11 weeks. During the 12-week period there were 686 deaths attributed to pneumonia-influenza.

The Special Surveillance Section of the State Health Department wishes to extend its appreciation to those who participated in the contribution of data making these reports possible, and welcome suggestions which would improve the epidemiological study of this important disease.